

NO 270

MISCELLANEOUS READING.
THE OLD BURYING GROUND.
BY JOHN G. WHITTIER.
Our vales are sweet with fern and rose,
Our hills are maple crowned:

But not from them our fathers chose
The village burying-ground.
The dearest spot in all the land,
To Death they set apart;
With scanty grace from Nature's hand,
And none from that of Art.
A winding wall of mossy stone,
Fest flung and broken lines;
A lonesome acre thinly grown
With grass and wandering vines.
Without the wall a birch-tree shows,
Its drooped and tassell'd head;
Within a stag-horned sumach grows
Fern leaved, with spikes of red.

Here, sheep that graze on neighboring plain,
 Like white ghostly forms come and go;
 The farm horse drags his slow chain,
 The cow bell tinkles low;
 Low mourns the river from its bed,
 The distant tones reply;
 Like mourners shrinking from the dead,
 They stand apart and sigh.
 Unshaded smiles the summer sun,
 Unchecked the winter blast;
 The school girl learns the place to shun,
 With glances backward cast—
 For thus our fathers testified—

That he might read who ran—
The prompness of human pride,
The nothingness of man.
They dared not plant the grave with flowers,
Nor dress the funeral sod,
Where, with a love as deep as ours,
They left their dead with God.
The hand and thorny path they kept,
From beauty turned aside;
Nor missed they ever those who slept,
The grace to life denied.
Yet still the wilding flowers would blow,
The golden leaves would fall.

The seasons come, the seasons go,
And God be good to all.
Above the graves the blackberry hung
In bloom and green its wreath,
And harbells swung as if they rung
The chimes of peace beneath.
The beauty nature loves to share,
The girl she hath for all;
The common light, the common air,
O'ercept the grave yard's wall.
It knew the glow of eventide,
The sunrise and the noon,

AND glorified and sanctified,
It slept beneath the moon.

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